

REP. RICHARD CURTIS



**REPRESENTATIVE
RICHARD CURTIS**

District Office:

1311 S.E. Grace Ave.
Suite 205
Battle Ground, Wa 98604
(360) 666-5259

Legislative Office:

320 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7850
Curtis.Richard@leg.wa.gov

Committees:

- Education
- Health Care (*Assistant Ranking Republican*)
- Transportation

Internet page:

[http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/
members/curtis.htm](http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/curtis.htm)

**Legislative information
on the Internet:**

www.leg.wa.gov

**State government
on the Internet:**

www.access.wa.gov

2006 Legislative Review

18th Legislative District

May 2006

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

First and foremost, allow me to tell you what a privilege and honor it has been to represent you in the Washington State House of Representatives.

It's true that most of the legislation passed this year had strong bipartisan support. But clear philosophical differences emerged in the debate on fundamental issues such as health care, public safety, taxes, spending, and the role of the voters in state government. Our discussions were lively at times but that's the way our legislative process is designed – the rocky path of the legislative process assures that only bills with the most solid footing can make it through.

This session, I took a list of agenda items to the Capitol. These goals – representing my commitment to the people of the 18th District and Southwest Washington as a whole – reflect what I have heard from you in our district and around the state. I sponsored and worked to pass legislation to help our state's families, business owners and local volunteers. I have outlined some of the highlights from this year's session in this newsletter.

I am your representative year-round. I encourage you to contact me during the interim with your concerns, state agency-related problems or ideas for next year's session. My contact information is listed on the left.

Sincerely,

Richard Curtis
State Representative
18th District



REP. RICHARD CURTIS

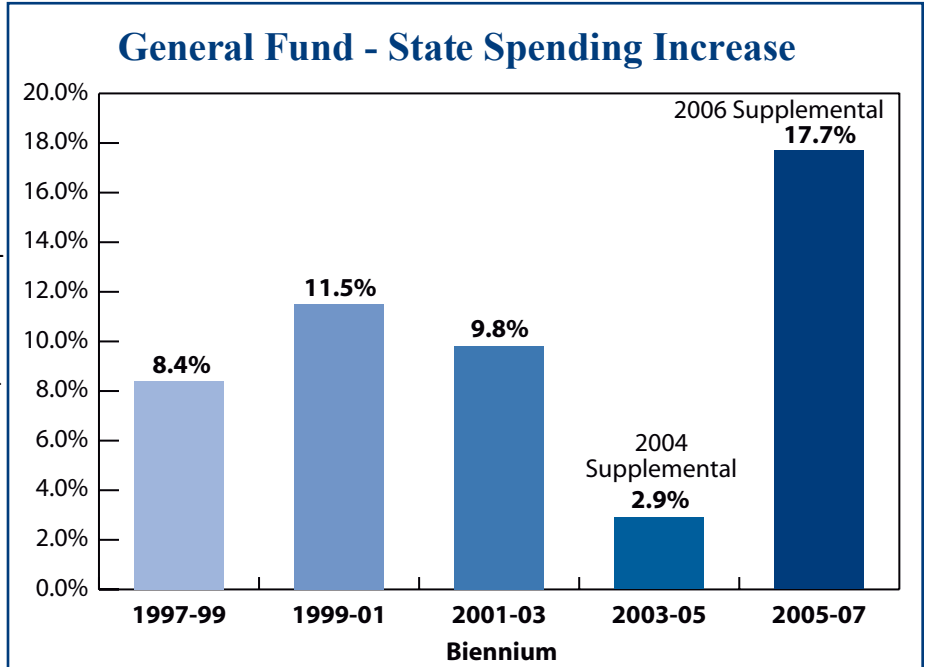
BUDGET

Last fall, state economists correctly predicted the state's budget surplus would be about \$1.6 billion. Like every other taxpayer, I went into this legislative session with the hope that fiscal restraint and responsibility would be the top priority for lawmakers when faced with the prospect of extra revenue. I also knew the temptation to spend the surplus would compel some lawmakers to ignore responsible budgeting practices. I urged my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to be disciplined and save the majority of the surplus in a secure, rainy-day fund.

There were differing proposals on how the surplus should be handled. My position was to advocate paying down the pension debt, saving millions of taxpayer dollars in the next two budget cycles. I also advocated for career and technical education pathway funding for skill centers like the one in Clark County. After those urgent needs were met, the remaining funds should be saved in a secure account for the future.

Unfortunately, the majority party approved a **\$1.3 billion budget increase, raising state spending by a record 17.7 percent** over the 2004 supplemental budget that failed to address the pension debt in a meaningful way. Instead, \$468 million in this budget is tied to new or expanded programs, far more spending than is necessary to make adjustments for unanticipated costs and urgent needs. And Democrats committed to spending over \$825 million more of taxpayer money by funneling it into separate, unprotected checking accounts, rather than leaving it in a true reserve.

This is the kind of spending I absolutely oppose. Leaving a \$600 million hole in the 2007-2009 budget puts Washington right back to a deficit situation that could have been avoided. Additionally it sets the taxpayers up for tax hikes to balance the budget. We all deserve better from our elected officials, and I will continue to advocate for budgeting reforms and a true reserve account that we can rely on in the event of a natural disaster or an economic downturn.



SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH CARE REFORM

As the assistant ranking Republican on the House Health Care Committee, I was pleased to advocate for true small business health care reform this session. There were several proposals this year that were touted as health care reform, but only **House Bill 2572**, as amended by the Senate, would have actually insured more Washingtonians.

The bill would have allowed for more choices in health care plans, tax credits for employers who purchase health care and greater access to health savings accounts. All of these are good things that small businesses desperately need to jump start some competition in our health care market to drive costs down. Unfortunately, these sections were removed from the bill, leaving small businesses to wait yet another year for meaningful health care reform.



Rep. Richard Curtis and Fire Chief Don Bivens (on the right of the governor) attend the signing of House Bill 2608.

TAKING CARE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

Taking care of the volunteers who take care of us is the focus of my bill, **House Bill 2608 — the Volunteer Firefighters' and Reserve Officers' Relief and Pension Act**.

This new law makes sure volunteer firefighters who are injured while performing community service as part of their local fire department duties receive medical benefits the same as a full-time paid firefighter. With the passage of this bill, our volunteer firefighters will be recognized for their community service whether they are saving a life or delivering food baskets to the needy. The new law takes effect June 7.

TAX FAIRNESS

All of us look for a good deal, especially when it comes to buying a car. But in Washington, even if you pay below book value, you are taxed based on what the state thinks you should have paid for the car.

To solve this problem, I introduced House Bill 2638, **The Vehicle Purchaser's Tax Fairness Bill**, which was a consumer-protection bill to specifically address tax fairness for consumers purchasing a used car. This bill would have ensured that consumers pay taxes on the money spent — not what the state says should have been spent. With the record number of bills introduced, this bill didn't make it out of committee this year.

Dealing with taxation issues, particularly tax fairness, should be one of our top priorities. When we can tackle tax issues on something as common as a car purchase, we'll be headed in the right direction.

LOCAL HEROES RECEIVE STATE MEDAL OF VALOR

It was my honor to nominate two Southwest Washington heroes, who saved a life at the risk of losing their lives, to be among the first four Washingtonians to receive the state's Medal of Valor.

Dennis Kinsey of Battle Ground and **Travis Jackson** of Vancouver were presented the Medal of Valor on February 20 in Olympia.



VOLUNTEERS CAN NOW SERVE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Our local volunteers serve our communities in different ways. They are called to serve as firefighters, community service stewards, and to hold elected or appointed government positions. Unfortunately, our state's laws prohibited volunteer firefighters, volunteer ambulance personnel, or reserve law enforcement officers from serving in elected or appointed positions.

House Bill 2606, which I sponsored this year, revises these outdated laws and authorizes volunteer firefighters and other volunteer personnel working for a city, town, or fire protection district to serve as an elected public official or hold an appointed public office. Our well-respected community volunteers should be able to work in many capacities for their cities and towns.



REP. RICHARD CURTIS



EDUCATION

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle worked to pass legislation this year to improve our education system. One measure that passed will expand the State Board of Education to include advocacy and strategic oversight of public education. This board will be charged with creating a system that personalizes education for each student.

While this bill was a good start for a more personalized education for our children, what was lacking was a clear definition of what a high school diploma is to each student. So this year, I introduced an amendment to the bill, **House Bill 3098**, that requires the State Board of Education to develop and propose a revised definition of the purpose and expectations for high school diplomas issued by public schools in Washington.

This revised definition will address whether a high school diploma is intended to signify that a student is ready for success in college, ready for successful and gainful employment in the workplace, or some combination of these and other objectives. It will also focus on the knowledge, skills, and abilities students are expected to demonstrate to receive a high school diploma, along with various other methods used to measure student performance, rather than focusing on courses, credits, seat time, and test scores.

“REST IN PEACE ACT” SHOULD BE LAW

Every now and again, we are asked to legislate something that we shouldn't even have to address. This session, we were faced with just such an occasion with the “Rest in Peace Act.”

Honoring those who've given their lives in the defense of their country is one of the most important priorities I have, not only as your representative but as proud citizen. With the recent trend of some groups protesting military funerals, **House Bill 3293**, the **Rest in Peace Act**, was introduced at the request of a Vietnam veteran who had experienced protesting at two funerals.

This bill would enable families to grieve in peace while laying their loved one to rest and would have extend the state's disorderly conduct law, a misdemeanor, to funeral protests. Protesters demonstrating within 500 feet of a funeral would be charged with disorderly conduct if they refuse to stop. This bill passed the House unanimously on the last day of session, but in a last minute change of heart, Senate leaders broke their promise to pass the bill and adjourned early.



INSIDE
• Budget
• Health care
• Volunteers
• Heroes
• Education

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA. 98504-0600

Rep. Richard Curtis

2006 Legislative Review

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing